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Adult school programs feel budget cuts

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Because of budget cuts affecting school districts all over California, several education programs around the state are being eliminated, and others are facing financial challenges. To help cover these shortfalls, some districts are grabbing money that had been set aside for adult schools.

Lucia Mar Unified School District's adult education is an umbrella for several such programs. Courses to obtain a GED, vocational courses, the English-learning program, classes for older adults and community classes are all offered.

Lucia Mar's adult ed program didn't start until the 1970s. California started offering GED and diploma classes after World War II for returning veterans.

Charlissa Boaz-Skinner has been the adult ed principal for Lucia Mar since the 2006-07 academic year. Prior, she taught kindergarten and administered after-school programs for the district.

She began as half-time principal, and the next year the position became fulltime. Because of budget cuts, in addition to her role as principal, Boaz-Skinner will be providing support to the after-school program's director.

Boaz-Skinner said this is one of the fortunate programs in the state, as the Lucia Mar school board is "very supportive of adult ed."

Santa Maria's adult ed program has ended with that district using its adult ed money toward regular school programs. Some of the adult students have contacted Lucia Mar about classes.

Budget cuts for the state school districts have been deep during the past two school years. There is still federal and state money going toward the GED program and English-language classes. Until this past school year, those classes were free. Now there are new registration and material fees.

Michele Cossey of Grover Beach has been teaching English-language classes for 15 years.

